

BACKMAN-GORSUCH HOUSE

35 WEST MAIN STREET

Number 35 West Main Street is significant as an example of how, in 1875, its builder took the traditional 5-bay, L-shaped house, and adapted it to fit his personal aesthetic needs, how he "customized it", if you will. Taking the building on its own terms, it is clear that it is a success - its iron trim on the front porch is superb in delicacy as well as in its creation of motion, as is the rest of the porch, as is all the stained glass which gives color to most of the windows, as is the heavy cornice, as is, most especially, the thrust given to the house by the oriels and bay windows that leap out on all sides. An eastern, 2-story oriel seems a particular success; its deep brown imbricated shingles cover it, drawing the eye in its direction; the eye is held by the luminous, airy quality of the stained glass on the first floor of the oriel and one wonders if the oriel is solid, or whether it has a gaseous beginning, gradually solidifying at the center, and then tapering off as the steeple roof grows slenderer and slenderer.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

CARR-427

0704274604

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Backman-Gorsuch House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

35 West Main Street (MD 32)

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Carroll

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

— DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

— STRUCTURE

— SITE

— OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

— PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

— BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

— IN PROCESS

— BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

— UNOCCUPIED

— WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

— YES: UNRESTRICTED

— NO

PRESENT USE

— AGRICULTURE

— COMMERCIAL

— EDUCATIONAL

— ENTERTAINMENT

— GOVERNMENT

— INDUSTRIAL

— MILITARY

— MUSEUM

— PARK

☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

— RELIGIOUS

— SCIENTIFIC

— TRANSPORTATION

— OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Robert L. Myers

Telephone #: 848-7155

STREET & NUMBER

257 East Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

— VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21157

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Carroll County Office Building

STREET & NUMBER

Center Street

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CARR-427

CONDITION☒ EXCELLENT☐ GOOD☐ FAIR☐ DETERIORATED☐ RUINS☐ UNEXPOSED**CHECK ONE**☒ UNALTERED☐ ALTERED**CHECK ONE**☒ ORIGINAL SITE☐ MOVED

DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The house built by William Backman a century ago looks north to the south side of West Main Street about 150' west of that street's intersection with Liberty Street (St. Route 27) in Westminster. At first glance, the house seems to have little to do with the City; one is struck by the two-story, oriel window with its steeple roof, and by other such protuberances. A second look reveals that, below these bulges and superficial dressings, the house is really only a normal five-bay, central-door, L-shaped building after all. The double entrance doors divide the ground floor in half. Each door is composed of a large, single-pane of glass; plain pilasters flank the door and support a two-part entablature. To the east, on the ground floor, are two, elongated, double-hung sash windows paned two-over-two. Windows are topped by four course gauged, flat arches. To the west, a space that would have been given to matching windows, has, instead, been filled by a 3-sided, bay window; there is one 1/1 window per side. The bay window continues to the second floor, where it is slightly differently treated. The windows have become shorter, their upper pane now consists of a central piece of stained glass with smaller stained glass squares around. There are three other 1/1 windows on the second floor; two vertically aligned with those on the ground floor are to the east, and a large window lights the central hallway. This central window has stained glass in both sashes, in a pattern similar to those on the second floor bay window. Also, like the bay windows, the second floor windows are "normal size". This facade is topped by a strong, richly-molded, two-part, bracketed entablature. The ground floor is shaded by a flat-roofed porch. The porch is supported by brick piers with lattice work between and is about three feet above the ground, with a single flight of 5, broad, wooden steps leading to it. Very fine ornamental ironwork runs across the flat roof of the porch, above its cornice. Between the square, wooden posts which support the roof, runs, at their tops, a row of thick spindels, and below, a vaguely Chippendale-like railing. Apparently, when the building was new, the ironwork was given extra liveliness by having one raised swirl above each post; six of these still remain in position to maintain some of the original effect.

The porch continues around to the west, where it runs back half the length of the building. The building, as noted, is L-shaped, consisting of two perpendicular gable-roofed sections. The northerly of the two sections, that fronting Main Street, is two bays deep. Ground floor bays are 1/1 windows similar to those on the Main Street facade, and, similarly, the second story fenestrations resemble that to the north; one 1/1 window to the north and a 3-sided, oriel window (with three 1/1 windows that are half stained glass) to the south. Two, small, two-light windows light the attic. All openings on the west facade are regularly placed and flank the corbel-capped, central chimney which rises, flush with the wall, at the gable's peak. The main cornice continues around this side hugging the

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

c. 1875

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

William Backman

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The architectural significance of 35 West Main Street is how its builder took the traditional five-bay, L-shaped house, and adapted it to fit his personal and aesthetic needs, how he "customized it" if you will. As this process is one that has been noticed elsewhere in the City, evaluating such buildings, commenting on them beyond merely noting that they do play with the basic form, requires comment on their changes, i.e., do the changes "help" the building? Certainly, few people would take issue with the remark that the idiosyncracies of no. 35 West Main Street help it and make it a far more interesting building than it would be otherwise. Its nearest relative in style, age, and size is no. 256 East Main Street. When compared to this building, no. 35 is livelier and probably shows a freer mind. However, to say that this is a "finer" building, would lead to arguments of Reason versus Emotion, arguments which would, in turn, lead us nowhere. Thus, taking no. 35 on its own terms, it is clear that the building is a success; its iron trim on the front porch is superb in its delicacy, as well as in its creation of "motion", as is the rest of the porch, as is all the stained glass, as is the heavy cornice, and as, most especially, are the oriels and bays that thrust out on all sides. The eastern, two-story oriel seems a particular success; the deep brown, imbricated shingles which cover it are well cut, and the views through the stained glass (i.e. looking north to south or south to north) give a luminous, airy quality to the base of the oriel, making one wonder if it is solid, or whether it has a gaseous beginning, gradually solidifying at the heart of the oriel, then tapering away as the roof grows slenderer and slenderer. I think that this lightness saves the building, and makes false the argument of some that the building is off balance.

William Backman leased lot 18, our property, from the Redemptionists on May 13, 1863; he took a 99 year lease at \$30 a year (Carroll County Deed Book 30, Page 319). Backman must have built the house later as rental property, as the City Directory lists Charles Gorsuch living there, and the 1877 City Map shows a building about the right size, shape, and location. Gorsuch, in fact, bought freehold interest in the lot from Backman on January 12, 1888 for \$7000 (67/110); Gorsuch sold the lot, again for \$7000, to Dora M. Cover (wife of Harry) on May 16, 1905 (101/438). The Covers transferred the land back and forth among themselves

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Being all of lot 18 as shown on a plat of the Catholic Chapel Addition recorded among the Land Records of Carroll County in Book 29, Page 446.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Christopher Weeks, Consultant

February, 1977

ORGANIZATION

Westminster Historical Sites Survey

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

c/o City Hall - Public Works Department

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Westminster

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

#7

gable roof and projecting about 2 feet; the cornice also tops the flat roof of the oriel. The cornice also runs the length of the rear L, which extends five bays to the north. Gable placement is rather irregular here, on the first floor at least. The ground floor has a set of French Doors to the south leading to the continuation of the Main Street ground floor porch, and, progressing to the south, a small 1/1 window, a larger 1/1 window and a glass and aluminum storm door. On the second floor, however, there is absolute symmetry; a central door at the two, flanking, small, 1/1 windows and flanking all, 2 larger 1/1 windows, all of which have three course gauged, flat arches. The door is approached by a single flight of steps on the north and has a small, brown, wooden porch to meet the steps.

The east facade is dominated by a central, square, oriel window, which from its corbel base to its tall steeple roof, appears to throw the building off balance, but which is a superb creation. All windows in the oriel are round arched; those on the second floor are elongated, those on the attic floor are smaller. There is, on each floor, one window to the north and one to the south, and two to the east. Windows on both floors are clear on their bottom sash and have a central pane of stained glass in their upper pane surrounded by smaller stained glass squares. The tower's roof has two slopes, gradual at first then sharper, giving the roof its extreme height. The peak is topped by a ball, and the entire roof is covered with slate tiles, with several rows of square-cut tiles alternating with several rows of imbricated tiles. (The roof of the main building is covered with slate also.)

Otherwise, the east wall of the Main Street section matches the west wall. To the south of the tower, the original L has had a square (15' x 15') two-story infill; there is, on the east front of this infill, a pair of 6/6 windows on the ground floor and a single 6/6 window on the second floor east of a small slit bathroom window. To the south, the infill has one, 6/6 window on the ground floor and one, small 1/1 window on the second floor to the east of a 6-panel door; the door is approached by a single set of wooden steps rising from the south. The original east front of the L has a door off of this porch and one, 1/1 window to the south by a 3-sided, oriel window; this matches the others in its use of stained glass on the upper sash of the three windows (one on each front). The oriel is flat roofed, and has a heavy, modillioned, denticulated cornice. The north front of the L has two, 6/6 windows on the ground floor, a central 1/1 window on the second floor, and three, small, 6/6 windows lighting the attic. All windows have brown, wooden sills and 3 course gauged, flat arches.

#8

and their relations (154/221, 181/242, and Will 15/513) until Bessie K. Cover sold the land to Charles H. Armacost on August 8, 1945 (187/244). Armacost sold to the present owner on April 24, 1974, in deed 567/517.

CARR-427

Backman-Gorsuch House (Cover House)

35 W. Main Street (MD 32), Westminster

Jennifer K. Cosham, 12 April 2006



North elevation

CARR-427
Backman-Gorsuch House
West Main Street
Westminster
Westminster Quad
Carroll County



73⁰/₀



#160

~~CLUB~~P~~98~~ 98 73%

"Cover House" - detail of
iron work on porch

(427)



CARR 427

35 W. MAIN ST.

WESTMINSTER

W. FACADE C. 1890

C. week 3/77 (C. L. Hist Socy)



CARR 427

35 W. Main St. Westside

2/77 SW Jacaulo

C. W. W. W.



CARR 427

35 W. Main St.

Westminster

N. Yonkers

2/72 C. Welch